Perceptions of Real-estate Brokers and Buyers: A Sales-Orientation, Customer-Orientation Approach

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This study evaluated the extent to which real-estate brokers adhere to the marketing concept by engaging in customer-oriented selling. The 24-item SOCO scale and samples of 425 real-estate consumers and 190 real-estate brokers were used to find that conflicting perceptions exist relative to the degree to which the brokers and the buyers of residential real estate assess brokers as being customer oriented.

Introduction

Approximately 10 years ago, Kotler and Connor (1977) introduced several issues relevant to the adaptation of current marketing thinking and practices in the service sector. Specifically, the authors identified factors that marketing practitioners must address when they are dealing with clients. Numerous writers have since focused on the service area and its unique problems (e.g., Uhl and Upah, 1983). However, investigation involving professional services has dealt with a traditional marketing exchange format, i.e., the relationship between sellers (providers of professional services) and buyers (persons who take title to professional services). Consequently, there is a lack of marketing research in the service sector where three parties are directly involved in an exchange transaction, i.e., a provider (the seller of a professional service), a client (the person who takes title to the service), and a buyer (the individual who takes title to a client's product). This type of transaction characterizes the exchange process within the real-estate industry.

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The Real-estate Transaction

Both real-estate salespersons and brokers are classified as "agents" whose primary function is to act on the behalf of others to effect the sale or lease of real estate. The most common real-estate brokerage relationship is that which exists between a property owner and a broker. In this setting, the broker is engaged by the owner—through a brokerage contract—to obtain a buyer or tenant of the property in question. This contract creates an agency arrangement between the two parties that is governed by a well-developed body of law referred to as the Law of Agency (Webster and Hetrick, 1983; Gibson et al., 1983).

The real estate agency concept is exemplified by the following channel association: property owner/seller (principal); real-estate brokerage firm; brokers X, Y, and Z (agents/subagents); residential marketplace (consumers/buyers). By virtue of this agency association (i.e., priority of contract), the brokers and salespersons are: 1) agents of the firm and 2) subagents of the principal. The property owner/seller (i.e., the principal) is contracted to pay a brokerage commission and, as such, is identified as the client. In such a typical real-estate transaction, the buyer is left without representation (Case, 1965; Webster and Hetrick, 1983; Gibson et al. 1983).

Brokers' Orientation

Both real-estate laws and morals clearly specify that when a broker is hired by the seller, the seller is entitled to receive absolute loyalty and obedience (Webster and Hetrick, 1983; Gibson et al., (1983). Webster and Hetrick (1983) state that:

This faith and confidence of the client imposes upon the broker the compelling duty to exert himself with reasonable diligence in his principal's behalf and to obtain for his client the most advantageous bargain possible under the circumstances of the particular situation. The agent's duty to represent the best interest of his principal is a duty to represent those interests to the exclusion of others, including his own. (p. 191)

Thus, the buyer is clearly not represented in the real-estate sales relationship. As stated by Gibson et al. (1983), the "...courts have regarded the relationship between broker and buyer as one of caveat emptor, reflecting the relationship between seller and buyer" (p. 299). While this perspective does not prevent a broker or salesperson from performing certain duties for the buyer, any motivation to do so would reside outside the traditional and legal views held by those in the real-estate industry.

However, it is questionable whether these legal and moral stances are consistent with the realities of the marketplace. Gibson et al. further state, "...certainly the accepted legal relationship between buyer and broker does not meet the expectations of most buyers of residential property...many buyers are not even aware that the broker is the seller's agent and not their own" (p. 299). The authors further indicate that the broker is placed in the dubious position of having considerable influence on buyers with little fear of legal repercussion.

In summary, buyers of real estate are not traditionally classified as clients, since
they are not directly responsible for the payment of commission fees. Therefore, the question arises as to how buyers are being serviced in the real-estate-exchange process and how brokers perceive themselves as providing such service.

Background Information

A review of the literature reveals a paucity of marketing research pertaining to real estate. Yet, the purchase of a home appears to be the single-most-important, and most expensive, household transaction for an individual or a family. The average price of a house in 1984 was $84,000 before finance charges; the median price at that time was reported to be $72,400. Similarly, from an industry standpoint, the residential real-estate market is sizable. In 1984, 2,868,000 homes valued at over $246.6 billion dollars were sold (Crella, 1985). Given that home buying is such a significant consumer purchase, more research is needed about the real-estate-exchange process in general.

Chambers et al. (1985) state that home buyers perceived that real-estate brokers/agents did not meet their (the buyers’) expectations. The authors’ findings support those of Swan and Epley (1983) who indicate that brokers failed to employ typical sales management techniques, job qualification selection procedures or marketing performance evaluations. Swan and Epley also report that a majority of sampled real-estate firms were “production” rather than “marketing” oriented. Patton and Peterson (1981) indicate that realtors held a more accurate perception of the importance of realtor attributes to sellers (i.e., principals) of real estate as compared to buyers of real estate.

Trombetta (1980) discusses the use of antitrust laws to control anticompetitive real-estate industry practices. Specifically, the author identifies several widely used tactics (many grounded on industry rules and regulations) that do not appear to be in the consumer’s best interest. Among those practices that Trombetta attacks are price-fixing (in reference to brokerage fees), constraints on promotion, and the use of multiple-listing services to deprive consumers of the right to contract with whomever they choose. He further states:

In short, the real estate industry appears to exhibit numerous anticompetitive practices which can affect consumers adversely in two important respects: they increase the cost of real estate transactions and restrict the freedom to deal in an open market with whomever they desire. (p. 143)

Purpose of the Study

Based on the preceding discussion, research is called for to ascertain how consumers (buyers) are being serviced by brokers in the residential real-estate arena and how brokers perceive themselves in providing such service. Specifically, the primary purpose of this study was two fold: 1) to assess the degree to which consumers (buyers) of real estate rate brokers as being customer oriented, and 2) to assess the degree to which real-estate brokers rate themselves as being customer oriented.

Customer-Oriented Selling

According to Saxe and Weitz (1982), “Customer-oriented selling can be viewed as the practice of the marketing concept at the level of the individual salesperson and
Table 1. Items Forming the Selling-Orientation Customer-Orientation Scale

1. I try to help customers achieve their goals.
2. I try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers.
3. A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind.
4. I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.
5. I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure.
6. I offer the product of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem.
7. I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer.
8. I answer a customer's questions about products as correctly as I can.
9. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product that helps him solve that problem.
10. I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him make a better decision.
11. I try to give customers an accurate expectation of what the product will do for them.
12. I try to figure out what a customer's needs are.
13. I try to sell a customer all I can convince him to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.
14. I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer.
15. I keep alert for weaknesses in a customer's personality so I can use them to put pressure on him to buy.
16. If I am not sure a product is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him to buy.
17. I decide what products to offer on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.
18. I paint too rosy a picture of any products, to make them sound as good as possible.
19. I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his needs.
20. It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer.
21. I pretend to agree with customers to please them.
22. I imply to a customer that something is beyond my control when it is not.
23. I begin the sales talk for a product before exploring a customer's need with him.
24. I treat a customer as a rival.


customer” (p. 343). The authors indicate that salespersons who are highly customer oriented engage in behaviors that increase long-term customer satisfaction and avoid behaviors that lead to customer dissatisfaction. Consequently, brokers who are customer oriented should avoid activities that raise the probability of making an immediate sale but sacrifice the customer’s interest.

Saxe and Weitz (1982) further point out that while numerous references to the benefits of customer-oriented selling have evolved in the last 50 years, little empirical research has examined the concept. To facilitate research into customer-oriented sales behaviors, the authors suggest that a method to measure customer-oriented selling is needed. Specifically, Saxe and Weitz developed and proposed the use of a 24-item paper and pencil selling orientation–customer orientation (SOCO) scale to measure the customer orientation of salespeople.

The SOCO Scale

The procedure used by Saxe and Weitz in the development of a customer-orientation scale parallels the formats offered by Churchill (1979) and Nunnelly (1978). The 24 items forming the SOCO scale can be seen in Table 1. The 12 positively stated items are presented first, followed by the 12 negatively stated ones. All items represent six categories that characterize customer-oriented selling (see Table 2).
Table 2. Categories That Characterize Customer-Oriented Selling

1. A desire to help customers make satisfactory purchase decisions.
2. Helping customers assess their needs.
3. Offering products that will satisfy those needs.
4. Displaying products accurately.
5. Avoiding deceptive or manipulative influence tactics.
6. Avoiding the use of high pressure.


The key concept exemplified by these characteristics is that a highly customer-oriented salesperson will not sacrifice a customer's best interests simply to make a sale. The SOCO scale was empirically tested, and the validity of the measure was demonstrated by Saxe and Weitz (1982).

Antecedents of the Customer-oriented Approach

Recognizing that a customer-oriented approach is more likely when salespersons feel that the benefits outweigh the costs, Saxe and Weitz argue that a customer-oriented approach should be expected when:

1. Salespeople can offer a range of alternatives and have the expertise to assist customers.
2. Customers are engaged in complex buying tasks.
3. A cooperative relationship exists between the salesperson and customers.
4. Referrals and repeat sales are an important source of business.

In light of the above criteria, the SOCO scale is an ideal measurement tool for researching the concept of the customer-oriented approach in the real-estate arena. First, the widely accepted use of the multiple-listing service (MLS) gives the real-estate broker access to a range of inventory far beyond that carried by his/her brokerage firm. More specifically, a real estate agent who participates in the MLS will have access not only to homes his/her firm contracts to sell, but to all homes listed by real-estate companies holding memberships in the MLS. Thus, the prospective buyer is offered a wider range of alternatives. With regard to expertise, most—if not all—states require individuals engaged in real-estate brokerage transactions to be licensed. An individual who seeks a license must possess—among other things—a specified amount of real-estate coursework and/or experience, plus score a satisfactory grade on the state licensing examination (Case, 1965; Webster and Hetrick, 1983).

Next, a home purchase constitutes a complex buying task. The sheer magnitude and complexity of the purchase process requires that a cooperative relationship exist between the salesperson and the buyer. In fact (as stated previously), this relationship is such that many buyers assume that the brokers are working for them.

Finally, referrals and repeat sales should be an important source of business for all firms, including those in the real-estate arena. While a lack of research exists concerning this topic, Chambers et al. (1985) indicate that the most important information sources used by consumers to select real-estate brokers were friends and co-workers who had previously purchased homes. This finding is corroborated by Nelson and Nelson (1987).
Table 3. Real Estate Transaction Variables Employed in the Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Brokers</th>
<th>Consumers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Follow-up visit to consumer</td>
<td>1. Follow-up visit by broker</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Reputation of agency</td>
<td>2. Reputation of agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Repeat usage by client</td>
<td>3. Repeat usage of broker</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Price range of homes sold</td>
<td>5. Price range of homes bought</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Purpose of home purchase</td>
<td>6. Purpose of home purchase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Experience in real estate business</td>
<td></td>
<td>7. Number of homes purchased in last 10 years</td>
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<td>8. Length of time with agency</td>
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<td>9. Method of compensation</td>
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<td>10. Broker's gross income</td>
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Methodology

Test Instrument

The instruments used in this study were designed to examine the degree of customer-oriented selling on the part of real-estate brokers among consumers (buyers) and brokers of residential real estate. Two questionnaires were developed using the 24-item scale proposed by Saxe and Weitz (1982). To correctly position this scale for consumer response, it was necessary to slightly alter the wording of some scale items. Each questionnaire contained SOCO scale items, demographic questions, and other questions (see Table 3) that were directly related to a real-estate transaction.

In validating the SOCO scale, Saxe and Weitz focused solely on the measurement of salespersons' perceptions. Consequently, it was necessary for the researchers to assess the test instruments' performance within each of the two groups (brokers and buyers of residential real estate) that had been selected for study. A procedure similar to that employed by Saxe and Weitz was used to make comparisons between the two groups chosen for the study.

Reliability. The coefficient alphas (Cronback, 1951) reported by Saxe and Weitz for their two samples was .86 and .83 respectively, each strong measures of internal consistency. For the sample of brokers and buyers employed in this study, the coefficient alphas were .88 and .91, respectively.

Factor Structures. A principal components, with varimax rotation factor, analysis, was performed on responses from both the broker and the consumer samples (see Table 4). A scree test revealed a two-factor solution for each group. In an analysis of the brokers' responses, Factor 1 accounted for 53.2% of the variance, while Factor 2 accounted for 10.7% of the variance. In an analysis of the consumers' responses, Factor 1 accounted for 48.4% of the variance, while Factor 2 accounted for 10% of the variance. For each sample, the two factors separated the positive statements from the negative statements. Factor 1 registered higher loadings for the negatively stated items and is, therefore, a hard-sell factor. Factor 2 registered higher loadings for the positively stated items and is, therefore, a customer-oriented
Table 4. Factor Loadings and Item-Total Correlations Generated From the SOCO Instrument by Brokers and Consumers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Number</th>
<th>Broker Group</th>
<th>Corrected R</th>
<th>Loading On</th>
<th>Consumer Group</th>
<th>Corrected R</th>
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The correlation between the positive and negative factors was .6608 for consumers and .315 for brokers, both of which were significant at $p < 0.0005$. Since both of these correlations are relatively high, there is support for the unidimensionality of the SOCO construct.

Item-Total Correlations. Corrected item-total correlations were computed for each item which related to the broker and the buyer groups (see Table 4). Results reveal a range of .35–.70 for the broker group and .50–.80 for the buyer group; all correlations were significant ($p = 0.001$). As a result, the slightly altered SOCO scale for the buyer group appeared to be sufficiently robust to perform when it was applied in a consumer (buyer) setting.

Survey Design

Consumer Sample and Data Collection. For the purpose of deriving the sample, listings of consumers (buyers) who had purchased a home within a 12-month period of time were obtained from counties in a southeastern state. A table of random numbers was used to generate the sample frame for this study from the consumer lists. Following a pretest, 425 consumers were identified to receive telephone calls.
by trained interviewers for the purpose of scheduling interview appointments, and all pretest subjects were omitted for final data collection purposes. No more than three callbacks to each subject were scheduled. Thus, 375 consumer interviews were scheduled and completed, which resulted in an 88% response rate.

Broker Sample and Data Collection. A list of brokers was compiled from the counties in which consumers (buyers) had been selected. Following a pretest, a table of random numbers was used to generate the broker sample frame. Again, all pretest subjects were omitted for final data collection purposes. A total of 190 brokers was identified, and personal interviews were scheduled. Completed interviews were obtained from 178 brokers, which produced a response rate of 93%.

Results

The SOCO Measure

As posited by Saxe and Weitz, the negatively stated items were reverse scored, and a total score was computed for each respondent. A 5-point scale (where 5 = Always, and 1 = Never) was utilized; the maximum possible score for each respondent in each group was 120. Thus, a high score would represent a high customer orientation. The mean score generated by brokers' responses was 102.24, with a standard deviation of 11.6. Consumers' responses generated a mean score of 89.9, with a standard deviation of 15.6. An analysis of variance (ANOVA) reports a significant difference between the consumer and broker groups concerning the degree to which each group rated real-estate brokers as being customer oriented ($F = 90.07; p \leq 0.01; r^2 = .139$). Specifically, the brokers perceived themselves to be more customer oriented when the broker results were compared with the results of sampled consumers.

Real-estate Transaction Variables

The analysis next focused on variables that are directly relevant to the home purchase transaction from both the consumer (buyer) and the broker samples (see Table 3). ANOVAs were performed using the SOCO scale as the dependent measure, and the real-estate transaction variables as categoric independent variables.

Consumers. Table 5 shows how the SOCO mean scores differed across categories of consumer (buyer) real-estate transaction variables. An ANOVA comparing the SOCO scores across the consumer real-estate transaction variables was performed (see Table 5). Results revealed that consumers attributed a higher customer orientation to those brokers who made a follow-up visit after the sale when compared to those who did not follow up ($F = 34.89; p \leq 0.001$). This supports the contention of Runkel (1983), which states that follow-up action from salespersons results in positive reactions from consumers. Analysis also revealed that consumers who purchased homes as principal residences attributed a higher customer orientation to brokers than did those who had purchased a house as a second residence ($F = 140.97; p \leq 0.001$). A review of the literature on real
Table 5. SOCO Mean Scores for Consumer Real-estate Transaction Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable*</th>
<th>SOCO Mean Scores</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up visit* ((r^2 = .086))</td>
<td>Yes: 92.54 (\cdot) 83.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Residence Second (Vacation) House</td>
<td>No:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of purchase* ((r^2 = .276))</td>
<td>One: 92.96 (\cdot) 71.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home buying experience in past 10 years* ((r^2 = .24))</td>
<td>Two: 89.98 (\cdot) Three: 88.09 (\cdot) Four or More: 86.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source from which buyer learned of realtor* ((r^2 = .04))</td>
<td>Yellow pages: 87.46 (\cdot) Newspapers: 84.70 (\cdot) Real-estate Publication: 75.00 (\cdot) Friend: 91.72 (\cdot) Co-worker: 90.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*\(p \leq .001\).
**\(p \leq .05\).
***\(p \leq .01\).

The corrected-rejection region is \(p \leq .01\), based on the Bonferroni test with a family-wise error rate of .10 and .7 comparisons (Keppel, 1982).

Home-buying experience appeared to impact the magnitude of the SOCO scores. Consequently, additional research relative to this action is called for. A major problem with multiple comparisons on a set of data is that the more comparisons are made, the more likely Type I errors will occur when the null hypothesis is true. Consequently, researchers make the distinction between the Type I error rate per comparison (PC) and the error rate familywise (FW). Specifically, the FW error rate deals with the probability of making one or more Type I errors in the set of comparisons being studied (Keppel, 1982).

Most researchers find themselves making both planned and unplanned (post hoc) comparisons. While both lead to an increase in the FW error, control of the error is handled differently. While there is no consensus as to how to deal with the problem, “The most widely used strategy is to evaluate planned comparisons in the normal way—at the usual PC or alpha rate—and to exercise control of the FW rate for post-hoc comparisons through special evaluation procedures . . . .” (Keppel, 1982, p. 146).

Home-buying experience appeared to impact the magnitude of the SOCO scores. First-time consumers (buyers) reported a higher customer-orientation score for brokers than did those who revealed that they had some prior experience with a home purchase \(F = 2.32; p = .05\). Again, a review of the real-estate literature provided no theoretical justification for this event. Yet, as mentioned earlier, the purchase of a home appears to be the most important—and most expensive—family
Table 6. SOCO Mean Scores for Broker Real-estate Transaction Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable*</th>
<th>SOCO Mean Scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Category</td>
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<td>Straight</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Method of</td>
<td>106.70</td>
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<td>compensationa</td>
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<td>$r^2 = .03$</td>
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<td>Follow-up visita</td>
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<td>Incomec</td>
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<td>$r^2 = .117$</td>
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*a* Those variables were identified to be significant based on ANOVA results.

A significant relationship also existed between a strong customer orientation for brokers and the sources from which consumers had learned about brokers ($F = 3.04; p = \leq 0.01$). Consumers who generated the highest SOCO scores were those who reported that they had learned of brokers from friends or co-workers. This supports the research of Patton and Peterson (1981), as well as that of Nelson and Nelson (1987).

Brokers. Table 6 shows how the SOCO mean scores differed across the categories of broker real-estate transaction variables. An ANOVA comparing the SOCO scores across these variables was performed. Brokers who were paid by straight commission generated higher SOCO scores than did those who were paid by a combination of salary and commission ($F = 4.78; p = \leq 0.03$). This supports the contention by Dodge (1973), Moynahan (1986), and Winer (1982) that pay on a commission basis has a direct motivational effect on salespersons to please customers. It should be noted that none of the brokers who participated in the study were compensated by the straight salary method. Brokers who reported earnings that fell in the lowest as well as the highest salary levels among the six predetermined categories also reported the highest scores of customer orientation. A cross tabulation revealed that brokers who earned lower incomes also held the least amount of real-estate experience. It is possible that such individuals manifest higher levels of customer orientation because of their desire to become a success in the field.

Similar to the consumer group, brokers who consistently followed up with their customers after the sale scored higher on the SOCO scale than did those who failed to follow up with customers ($F = 4.16; p = \leq 0.04$). Again, this supports Runkel's (1983) proposition that sales follow-up creates positive consumer reaction. Each
broker was assigned an identification number, where such numbers were classified by a level in each of the transaction variables. Results indicate that those brokers with the highest SOCO scores fell into the same categories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

As suggested earlier, a key benefit of a customer-oriented sales approach is that salespeople should keep in mind the customer's best interest when in the process of making a sale. As noted by Kurtz et al. (1976), who explicitly connected the behavior of salespeople to the marketing concept, "Sales personnel no longer specialize solely in increasing sales volume; rather the prospect's real needs became the basis of the marketing plan" (p. 13). In essence, the objective of customer-oriented selling is to operationalize the marketing concept at the level of the individual salesperson and the customer (buyer). Consequently, mutually beneficial, long-term relationships can be established between a company and its market (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Kotler, 1980).

The purpose of this research effort was to determine the degree to which real-estate brokers rate themselves as being customer oriented, as well as the degree to which consumers (buyers) of residential real-estate rate brokers as being customer oriented. It is hoped that this study's results contribute to the state of knowledge concerning the marketing orientation of real-estate brokers. However, as with any research effort, care should be exercised in using the results from a single study to make broad generalizations. Nevertheless, the findings generated in both the secondary research effort and the primary (empirical) research suggest several important implications.

First, there is a dearth of marketing research concerning real-estate transactions. Although brokers are required by most states to participate in extensive coursework and training, their orientation primarily centers on financial and legal concepts as well as real-estate terminology. As such, the real estate arena is lacking in a literature base that is necessary for the development of a coherent research structure and/or models that might evolve into a fruitful marketing research paradigm. Given the marketing-related problems inherent in the real-estate industry, research is needed to fill this void.

Empirically, this study suggests that consumers (buyers) of real estate do not perceive real-estate brokers to be as customer oriented as they (the brokers) perceive themselves to be. Brokers did score themselves as being responsive to buyers. However, the factors were the result of an orthogonal rotation, which suggests that a self-scored consumer orientation does not preclude the existing hard-sell perspective on the part of brokers. Thus, they do appear to be more production rather than marketing oriented.

It should be noted, however, that some brokers tend to be more customer oriented than others. Those who make it a practice to follow up with consumers (buyers) not only scored themselves higher on the SOCO scale, but they also received higher SOCO ratings from buyers who received follow-up visits and/or telephone calls. In essence, one might conclude that in order to maintain a consistently high customer-orientation level, real estate brokers need to develop and implement policies and procedures relative to consistent customer follow-up after a completed sale.
Additionally, the method by which brokers are paid—combined with their level of earnings—bears a relationship to the brokers' level of perceived customer orientation. Specifically, brokers who reported that they were paid on a straight commission basis perceived themselves to be more customer oriented than those who were paid otherwise. Another finding of a conflicting nature indicated that brokers who reportedly placed themselves in the lowest and highest earnings categories received the highest customer-orientation scores. As such, future research is needed to assess the importance of compensation plans relative to the customer orientation of brokers.

With regard to purpose of residence, consumers who reported buying a home for a principal residence indicated that their brokers were more customer oriented. This variable, however, did not reveal a difference in customer orientation on the part of brokers. This finding cannot be directly explained, and, as a result, the purpose of residence variable warrants further investigation.

In a similar vein, first-time home buyers reported a higher customer orientation for brokers than did those who revealed they had some prior experience with the purchase of houses. Again, this finding cannot be directly explained and, consequently, should be investigated in future studies.

Finally, the SOCO scale does appear to be a robust and useful measure of the customer orientation of salespeople. Indeed, the value of the measure is enriched when consumer perceptions are also measured, as this study suggests that salespersons' customer-orientation perceptions may differ from those of consumers. And, from a marketing perspective, customers' views are essential in developing a well-defined, comprehensive, and strategic-marketing plan.

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